

# **TESTIMONY OF THE HONORABLE DON DAVIS OF NORTH CAROLINA**

Thank you, Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, and all Members of this distinguished Committee for allowing me to speak on the issues that matter to the residents of North Carolina's First Congressional District.

Much of eastern North Carolina is rural. Our communities direly need broadband. The steps this Committee takes to roll out broadband in rural America will significantly improve the lives of families and businesses across my District.

Also, the Committee must leverage the U.S. Coast Guard to further support our national interests. Over the past three years alone, Air Station Elizabeth City completed over 570 Search and Rescue missions that protected approximately \$850,000 in property and saved 130 lives. Additionally, the Base helps with hurricane response and recovery.

Economic development is crucial. The Southeast Crescent Regional Commission's mission addresses economic and poverty issues in districts like North Carolina's First. Thirteen of the First Congressional District's 19 counties are economically distressed. Clearly, we need help to increase workforce availability, invest in critical infrastructure needs, promote business innovation and access to capital, and so much more. I ask for you to support the SCRC so that districts like mine can successfully move into the 21st Century.

Other significant issues for us include hurricanes and flooding. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has done a phenomenal job training local government officials to ensure these communities have an emergency preparedness plan before each event. However, we must enhance recovery procedures. Under current law, FEMA can only restore buildings to their previous state before an event and cannot make enhancements to structures to prevent or mitigate future disasters. We need to move "upstream," not "downstream," and make these structures more resilient so that FEMA does not have to pour public dollars back into the same buildings that may again come crashing down.

The Albemarle Sound is vital for our local communities' success, but water levels continue to rise, and permanent flooding follows. I ask you to support coastal flood mitigation so that my constituents' homes do not end up in the Sound.

The economic well-being and safety of communities go beyond FEMA's work. Rail and freight are key parts of that same framework. Large amounts of freight are shipped in the District – we are vital to the East Coast's economic engine. Economic development is essential along the rail corridor in communities that need good-paying jobs.

The Committee is encouraged to support rail and freight shipping to further foster economic opportunities while pushing for more rail safety measures in rural and low-income communities.

The final issue noteworthy to highlight today is airport infrastructure and the importance of FAA reauthorization.

Pitt-Greenville Airport is a non-hub airport. Like many smaller-sized airports, it has faced economic challenges since the pandemic, losing 50 to 60 percent of air service. While the airport sought to use over \$1 million in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding to provide more access to additional hangers, it now may be forced to allocate these funds for an unrelated project that is already delayed.

We must allow smaller airports to focus on their immediate infrastructure needs in the FAA reauthorization package.

I genuinely appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Committee today on the critical issues impacting my constituents, and I look forward to rolling up my sleeves and working with you.

I yield back.